

3: Strengthening Secondary Materials Markets

Challenges, Opportunities and Actions

Members of the America Recycles Network have been working together to identify challenges and opportunities related to strengthening secondary materials markets. The group identified a set of near-term and longer-term actions designed to develop or strengthen secondary markets for materials, connect manufacturers to these markets, promote innovations in packaging and manufacturing to create more demand for these secondary materials, and create jobs. The group prioritized this list of actions and selected one to begin immediately in advance of America Recycles Day 2019.

Immediate Action

Challenge/Opportunity: One of the key barriers to use of secondary materials is connecting those materials to potential users. In some cases, these potential secondary markets don't yet exist in areas and need to be cultivated, which can lead to economic development opportunities.

The group could work to bridge connections between recycling facilities and regional, state, or local economic development organizations. Building on the model developed by the state of South Carolina, Pennsylvania and others, partnerships between local economic development organizations, like state department of commerce organizations, and state environmental organizations could be developed. For example, in South Carolina the creation of a specific office focused on materials recovery and recycling was unique. The department focuses on recruiting end users of recycled materials for the manufacturing sector which has helped the state develop and maintain markets for materials. Encouraging these partnerships will help materials find new markets and create markets for existing materials. The workgroup could generate ideas on how to encourage and develop these connections.

Purpose: Develop a training course that can be used to help communities create the infrastructure needed to promote materials recovery and cultivate end users of recycled materials.

Action Description: Workgroup members will design a model, training course, and/or technical resources that can be used to help communities develop a system for encouraging materials recovery and end users of secondary materials. This work will build on models developed by the state of California, Pennsylvania, and others. The model may address how to establish partnerships between local economic development organizations, state environmental organizations, and other business networks. The workgroup will build on the experiences of others and determine how best to translate these local success stories into a more universal process for other communities to follow.

America Recycles Day 2019 Deliverable: The model, training course, and/or resource material will be shared at the 2019 ARD Summit.

Key steps:

1. Confirm and refine concept.

2. Discuss state experiences and available materials and resources.
3. Determine what additional materials need to be developed.
4. Develop course outline and other resources and materials.
5. Provide information about course offerings and availability of resources at the meeting.

Key Players:

- XXX will lead the effort – assisting in agenda development and promoting group progress.
- ARD workgroup members will provide input on course and material design.
- EPA will assist in organizing feedback from workgroup members.

Additional Actions

To be determined.

Background

The rise of import bans on recycled materials has accelerated the need to improve domestic markets for recyclable materials and recyclable products, as well as to integrate recycled materials and end-of-life management better into product and packaging designs. The closure of foreign markets for recyclable materials has fundamentally changed the assumptions governing the economics of recycling.

Encouraging communication and collaboration across the different sectors of the economy, including private enterprise and government entities, will support innovation and the development, manufacture and reuse of high-quality recyclable materials that consumers want to purchase, that manufacturers want to use as feedstocks, that retailers want to offer for sale, and that recyclers want to collect and reprocess.

A stronger domestic recycling market will support local communities by creating more jobs and providing the overall U.S. economy with greater resilience and self-reliance. Municipalities will achieve cost savings when the markets for recycled materials are improved and more robust.

Vision

High-quality recycled materials are produced that can be incorporated easily into products, driving demand and creating an integrated, robust and sustainable domestic recycling market.

Work Underway/Success Stories

Individuals and organizations across the country are already working to how we measure success and progress across the recycling infrastructure. For example:

- Michigan has a statewide campaign to improve quality and investing in grants to help communities reduce contamination.
- Michigan plans to focus on supporting end-use market development.
- North Carolina is providing grants to develop recycling markets for materials impacted by foreign import restrictions.

- The state of New York has convened stakeholder meetings on recycling and has identified education, infrastructure and market development as key themes.
- The ASTSWMO Task force will be reaching out to all states to see what is happening to respond to China's actions—data to be available summer 2019.
- Washington State has a number of projects they are currently working on, including creating an industrial waste center and an outreach campaign to reduce contamination.
- National Recycling Coalition (NRC) has hosted three workshops and is planning up to five more to bring all parts of the recycling community together to present information and talk to each other.
- As part of the Resource Recycling Economic Opportunity grant program, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has developed and is currently instituting the freshman class of NextCycle, a program designed to help businesses build or expand end market opportunities in the state.
- The Association of Plastic Recyclers has a program called Demand Champions, which is designed to fill in information gaps for end markets and help drive demand for recycled plastic.
- Several of Danone's water brands are implementing commitments to using recycled content in their products.
- The Institute Scrap Recycling Industries' (ISRI) Design for Recycling Award is offered annually to recognize the most outstanding contribution to products designed with recycling in mind, recognizing the steps manufacturers have actively taken to incorporate Design for Recycling principles into their products and manufacturing processes.
- The [[HYPERLINK "https://www.isri.org/recycling-commodities/scrap-specifications-circular"](https://www.isri.org/recycling-commodities/scrap-specifications-circular)] provides guidelines for buying and selling a variety of processed scrap commodities, including ferrous and nonferrous metals, recovered paper and fiber, plastics, electronics, rubber, and glass. The Circular is revised regularly and as needed to keep up with market conditions, and the ISRI Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) Council has nearly completed a revised draft of the Inbound specifications, which should be implemented this summer.
- Sustainable Packaging Coalition (SPC) released two pieces, a compendium goals database to compile industry commitments from brands and retailers to use recycled materials, and a guide for Recycled Content to assist with design challenges for recycled packaging.
- The Recycling Partnership has completed several MRF studies that could be helpful.
- A project in New York City Union Square is exploring different options for recycling bins that will help reduce contamination.
- The Procter & Gamble Company is attempting to work with a more consistent set of resins across brands to reduce confusion.
- Through the REMADE Institute, a project titled Mapping the Materials Base (Round 1 Project; Yale University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology) is underway.
- Reclay StewardEdge is completing a survey to find where recycled materials are coming from and which industries or companies are looking to acquire the materials, will have a product out soon to help people find markets for materials.
- The REMADE Institute, one of the "America Makes" programs within the Department of Energy, has been doing a lot of work in to develop end-markets for materials. There is a recycling focus to the Institute, which looks at embodied emissions through the remanufacturing and recycling

of electronics, metals, fibers, and plastics. The America Makes program has hundreds of partners involved through research grants at their national lab or partner universities.

- Create research and development projects at the university level that are part of the standard curriculum.
- Material Recovery for the Future is working with MRFs to expand the types of materials that are collected.
- Western Michigan University provides a training on paper recycling. Other universities also have similar programs and efforts to expand and improve the ways these types of programs could be considered.